

THE HARVARD GRADUATE MUSIC
FORUM AND DEPARTMENT OF
MUSIC PRESENT...

COLOR! and music!

AN
INTERDISCIPLINARY
GRADUATE STUDENT
CONFERENCE

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STUDENT WORKSHOP LED BY
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CONSERVATORY OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY /
MEGAN CONLON - PRINCETON UNIVERSITY /
MARISSA GLYNIAS - YALE UNIVERSITY / **BRENDAN
KIBBEE** - THE GRADUATE CENTER AT CUNY /
KELSEY KLOTZ - WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, ST.
LOUIS / **KAREN SIEGEL** - THE GRADUATE CENTER
AT CUNY / **ANASTASIA UDARCHIK** - UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

**SATURDAY, FEB 22,
2014
9-6**

**FANNY PEABODY MASON
MUSIC BUILDING
ROOM 9**

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

**SPONSORED BY THE DEPARTMENT
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STUDENT COUNCIL!**

**The Harvard University Graduate Music Forum,
The Department of Music at Harvard University, and the
Harvard University Graduate Student Council**

present

Color and Music

An Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference

February 22, 2014

Fanny Peabody Mason Music Building

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Program Chairs:

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Special Thanks to: Harvard Music Department Staff and Faculty and the Graduate Student Council

Schedule

8:30 Breakfast Reception (Room 9)

9:00 – 10:30 Session 1 chaired by Christopher Hasty, Walter W. Naumburg Professor of Music (Room 9)

* Anastasia Udarchik (University of Toronto): *Sound Visualization in Amon Tobin's ISAM (2011): Synesthesia and the Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness in Neo-Minimalist Electronic Dance Music*

* Karen Siegel (CUNY Graduate Center): *Timbral Tension and Release in Kaija Saariaho's From the Grammar of Dreams*

* Marissa Glynias (Yale University): *The Colors of Catholic Songs: The Manipulation of Timbre in the Construction of Musical Communities in Andavadoaka, Madagascar*

10:45 – 12:15 Student workshop led by Aaron Einbond, Lecturer in Composition at Harvard University (Room 4)

Klangfarbenmelodie: what Music Information Retrieval can tell about timbre, noise, and digital (un)creativity

12:15 – 2:15 Lunch

2:15 – 3:15 Session 2 chaired by Carol Oja, William Powell Mason Professor of Music (Room 9)

* Kelsey Klotz (Washington University, St. Louis): *Different Bodies, Different Sounds: Charlie Parker and Paul Desmond*

* Brendan Kibbee (CUNY Graduate Center): *Black Labor and the Deep South in Ellington's Black, Brown and Beige and Hurston's The Great Day*

3:30 – 4:30 Session 3 chaired by Sindhumi Revuluri, Associate Professor of Music (Room 9)

* Megan Conlon (Princeton University): *Shades of Grey in Hahn's Chansons Grises*

* Devon J. Borowski (The Peabody Conservatory of The Johns Hopkins University): *An Opera for America: La sonnambula in Antebellum America*

**5:00 – 6:00 Keynote address given by Tamara Roberts, Assistant Professor of Performance Studies and Ethnomusicology at the University of California, Berkeley
(Room 9)**

Spiritual Technologies and the Metaphysics of Enslavement

6:00 Reception (Taft Lounge)

Session One

Chair: Christopher Hasty, Walter W. Naumburg Professor of Music, Harvard University

**Anastasia Udarchik (University of Toronto): Sound Visualization in Amon Tobin's ISAM (2011): Synesthesia and the Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness in Neo-Minimalist Electronic Dance Music*

Altered states of consciousness—such as hypnotic or trance-like states that alter our perception of time—have often been discussed within the context of experiencing electronic dance music (EDM) at live performances. The ability to evoke these altered states is often attributed to the various minimalist qualities found within EDM: repetition, hyper-clarity, minor variations, and encouragement of subtler perceptions. While this kind of aural stimulation can be a powerful cause of a subjective time lapse on its own, what are the cumulative effects on individual and collective internal time experiences when a prominent visual element is incorporated into the live execution of this music?

In support of his 2011 album *ISAM: Invented Sounds Applied to Music*, EDM artist Amon Tobin created a live show that demonstrated both an audio and a visual presentation of the album. Using the latest sound visualization techniques of live video mapping, abstract images are projected onto an overwhelmingly large cubic structure as Tobin performs. How is this intersensory experience different from a primarily auditory stimulation, i.e. the typical DJ-performer in front of the spectator-audience, in terms of influencing perceivers' internal time-consciousness? And how and why do these altered states arise?

I argue that the addition of sound visualizations in the form of video images derived from Tobin's music causes a breakdown in the perceiver's segregation of senses, transforming these EDM concerts from principally aural experiences into intermedia spectacles that simulate audio-visual synesthesia. This consequently results in a heightened intersensory perceptual involvement with the music and a stronger lapse in internal time-consciousness, impossible to achieve through sonic means alone.

* Karen Siegel (CUNY Graduate Center): *Timbral Tension and Release in Kaija Saariaho's From the Grammar of Dreams*

Kaija Saariaho has suggested that timbre might be elevated to a level of formal importance traditionally reserved for harmony (Saariaho, 1987). In the same issue of *Contemporary Music Review*, Fred Lerdahl argued that specific timbres are inherently consonant or dissonant, and can be used much like consonant and dissonant intervals to create tension and release (Lerdahl, 1987). In *From the Grammar of Dreams*, Saariaho manipulates timbre to create tension and release that contributes to the form of the work.

Composed in 1988, *From the Grammar of Dreams* is a five-movement work for soprano and mezzo soprano in which Saariaho juxtaposes two texts by Sylvia Plath—the poem “Paralytic” and three excerpts from Plath’s autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar*. Saariaho uses a wide palette of vocal techniques to create timbral tension and release. Singers modify the amount of vibrato in their voices, sing and speak while inhaling and exhaling, extend consonants, whisper and speak in semi-theatrical ways, and make gradual transitions from one vocal technique to another.

Drawing from the multiple dimensions of timbre that have been discussed (Grey, 1975, 1977; McAdams, 1999; Miisdaris et al, 2010), I examine the dimensions of noise, airiness, brightness, and amount of vibrato in *From the Grammar of Dreams*, applying Robert Morris’ contour theory (Morris, 1987) in my analyses. I demonstrate that the resulting timbral contours create patterns of tension and release that at times reinforce each other, but more commonly fluctuate independently, resulting in successive waves of tension and release across different timbral dimensions.

* Marissa Glynias (Yale University): *The Colors of Catholic Songs: The Manipulation of Timbre in the Construction of Musical Communities in Andavadoaka, Madagascar*

In the coastal village of Andavadoaka, Madagascar, the genre referred to as “Catholic songs” is sung with a diverse range of tone colors. While this genre includes both liturgical and popular songs, the songs are performed anywhere and everywhere, and represent a group of songs that “everyone knows by heart.”¹ But not all spaces are created equally, nor are they colored equally, as the various activities that take place in these spaces necessitate a range of expressive timbres. In focusing on two such contexts, a Sunday morning church service and an evening from the wake of a young man, I examine the role of timbre in constructing two distinct vocal aesthetics; while the church context prioritizes a cohesive vocal aesthetic, in which a full-bodied sound is supplemented by collectively and uniformly performed stylizations, the context of the wake exhibits a diverse set of individual vocal improvisatory practices, which are bounded within a timbral aesthetic of nasality and harshness. I argue that these performed vocal aesthetics play an integral role in the formation of musical communities in church and wake singing. In the church, the homogeneous sound creates a musical and social community in which singers actively participate and raise their voices in praise together. While individual voices are both heard and praised in the wake context, their unanimous performance of *hiri masake*, or “ripe” singing, aids in the formation of a musical community in which a performer’s personal emotional experience embodies the collective grieving of singers and non-singing participants alike.

¹ Astuti, Rita. *People of the Sea: Identity and Descent among the Vevo of Madagascar*. No. 95. Cambridge University Press, 1995: 111.

Session Two

Chair: Carol Oja, William Powell Mason Professor of Music, Harvard University

* Kelsey Klotz (Washington University, St. Louis): *Different Bodies, Different Sounds: Charlie Parker and Paul Desmond*

In *Sensational Knowledge: Embodying Culture through Japanese Dance*, Tomie Hahn asks: “What stories are told by bodies that differ?”² While Hahn seeks to understand performers’ stories through embodiment, I reverse this question, asking instead what stories were written *for* bodies that differ. In this paper, I consider the stories constructed by mid-century jazz critics for alto saxophonists Charlie Parker and Paul Desmond. The reviews and articles critics wrote demonstrate both how listeners were socialized to hear race and the process of reifying the relationship between race, color, and sound. Whereas critics heard Parker’s body in his improvisations, they often heard Desmond’s solos as intellectual and disembodied. This paper will deconstruct the creation of what Ted Gioia calls the “Primitivist Myth,” as well as what I classify as intellectual privilege narratives by critics such as Leonard Feather, Joe Goldberg, Max Harrison, Nat Hentoff, and Barry Ulanov. Analysis of their writings will introduce a discussion of improvisations by Parker (“Shaw ‘Nuff”) and Desmond (“Just One of Those Things”). These musical case studies will consider what critics heard in the music itself, which usually both confirmed and led to further distinctions between the two musicians and their stories based on race. Ultimately, Parker and Desmond’s critics determined their narratives more than the musicians themselves could, which resulted in easy stereotypes of different authenticities used to summarize difficult stories about two different bodies and sounds.

* Brendan Kibbee (CUNY Graduate Center): *Black Labor and the Deep South in Ellington’s Black, Brown and Beige and Hurston’s The Great Day*

Among the musical representations of Deep South African-American life circulating in the 1930s and early 1940s, Duke Ellington’s *Black, Brown and Beige* and Zora Neale Hurston’s staged revue *The Great Day* stand out for their shared emphasis on the laboring body. This emphasis, I argue, countervailed predominant representations in two important spheres of artistic activity at the time: Tin Pan Alley had inherited much from the legacy of nineteenth century blackface minstrel theater and tended to present Southern plantation life through nostalgic, bucolic tableaux and through playful “naturally rhythmic” dancing black bodies; intellectuals associated with the Harlem Renaissance, casting the concert spiritual as the music best suited to put black cultural actors on equal footing with their white counterparts, positioned the “soul” as the bearer of African-American culture, thus downplaying the role of the body.

Writing about English pastoral poetry in *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams argued that the imagined god-given privileges of the seventeenth-century country lord were supported by images that hid the relationship between labor and the “natural” landscape. Similar ideological work can be seen in what Ellington labeled “the Dixie Chamber of Commerce dream picture of the South.” Through Ellington’s poetry and Hurston’s critical essays, I show the intent of these artists to reimagine the Deep South in ways that highlight the contribution of African-American labor. Then, through an analysis of Ellington’s music and Hurston’s staging of folkloric songs, I demonstrate the specific ways that each artist went about realizing this intent.

²Tomie Hahn, *Sensational Knowledge: Embodying Culture through Japanese Dance* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2007), 168.

Session Three

Chair: Sindhumathi Revuluri, Associate Professor of Music, Harvard University

* Megan Conlon (Princeton University): *Shades of Grey in Hahn's Chansons Grises*

The title of Reynaldo Hahn's first song cycle, *Chansons grises* (*Grey Songs*), seems to be a straightforward allusion to Paul Verlaine's "Art poétique," the quasi-manifesto of symbolist aesthetics. As the texts for all seven of the songs come from Verlaine, it is the natural assumption is that the color grey describes the junction between precision and imprecision, as in the lines "Rien de plus cher que la chanson grise/ Où l'Indécis au Précis se joint." Indeed, the literary associations of these songs have been important enough to biographers of Hahn that one narrates a fictional story in which Verlaine bursts into tears upon hearing a performance of the cycle at Eduard Daudet's salon.

Yet at the time Hahn composed his grey songs, another vision of the color may have been foremost in his mind. A description of the famous society figure Robert de Montesquiou wearing an iron-grey overcoat, mouse-grey spats, audacious mauve-grey gloves and a turtledove-grey tie suggests different, less artistic associations for the gloomy color. Moreover, a closer analysis of the music of one of these songs, compared with a contemporaneous setting of the same poem by Gabriel Fauré, reveals a degree of superficiality. Untroubled sectionalization and conventionalized temporality do not match Verlaine's sophisticated and avant-garde verse. Rather, the short character pieces convey a connection with the superficial, appearance-based style prevalent at Parisian salons by the 1890s. Questioning the color grey helps us to understand the limits of Symbolism in music, separating symbolist art songs from dandified salon artifacts.

* Devon J. Borowski (The Peabody Conservatory of The Johns Hopkins University): *An Opera for America: La sonnambula in Antebellum America*

In the early nineteenth century, the music-culture of the United States was rich with variety and free from the rigid boundaries of genre that would develop as the century dragged on. The story of Vincenzo Bellini's opera, *La sonnambula*, in America provides unique insight into this world and the elements that instigated its progression. Owing to its immense popularity throughout the young country, *La sonnambula* was presented extensively, not just in its original form, but also as staged parodies, home piano arrangements, and dance tunes for brass bands. Most fascinating, however, was its overlap with the blackface minstrelsy's most popular period in this country: the 1840s and 1850s. In *La sonnambula*, minstrels found tropes that would easily transition onto the minstrel stage, creating burlesques that ranged from shallow imitations to intricate satires of the genre that demonstrate an understanding of the musical forms and style. This would imply an intimate familiarity with these aspects of Italian opera on the part of the average audience member. Issues of class and gender that are central to the plot of *La sonnambula* found a recognizable home on the minstrel stage, where they were filtered through the ubiquitous lens of color in Antebellum America: black and white. As a result, blackface minstrelsy may have provided audiences with the first opera over which they could take cultural ownership. The circumstances surrounding this fascinating period of American history have much to reveal about our understanding of genre, the enigma of minstrelsy, and the racialized music of America.